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ABSTRACT

A teacher of hearing impaired students describes an approach to oral composition in which a student's sign language telling of a story was videotaped and then students were asked to write a draft on their topic. Results demonstrated the need to focus on coherence through the use of transitions. She suggests that benefits of the video-oral drafting technique include the recognition for the student of the differences between oral and written language and the opportunity for the teacher to isolate areas which could be improved through instruction. A second approach is described in which an audiotape was used to help a cerebral palsied quadriplegic student organize her compositions. (CL)

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NCTE, Fall, 1981
Session F.9
Oral Composition in the Classroom
(Handicapped Students)

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I would like to share two uses of oral composition with handicapped students. One method uses video tape with hearing impaired students; the other method uses audio tape with a quadriplegic student.

For the past several semesters, I have been involved in teaching hearing impaired students in self-contained classes of English 101 and English 102. In last spring's English 102 class, primarily a literature course, I had the students keep journals of personal writing which corresponded to the reading we were doing for class. They wrote memoir papers of events in their own lives which paralleled situations in the lives of the characters we were reading about. When I read their journals, these written attempts were brief--seldom longer than a paragraph--were disjointed, and were lacking in detail. Yet, when I asked the students to "tell" in sign language, the same stories in class, their stories were coherent and detailed and interesting.

At the same time, I became acquainted with the work being done in oral drafting and protocol analysis and decided to investigate the differences and similarities between the students' oral/signed stories and the same stories in written form. I wanted to see what choices these writers made and to hypothesize what problems they encountered as they went from their languages

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(variants of American Sign Language) to English.

To do this, I gave each of the students a topic related to a time when the student was frightened or a time when the student was apprehensive about a first experience. The students were then videotaped as they told their stories in sign language. It seemed to me that this sign language version was their oral draft. After a student finished a story, classmates and I asked questions to clarify parts of the story or to elicit details which had not been previously included. The student's answers to these questions were also videotaped, and the student received a list of the questions asked. The students were then allowed to watch their video tapes and, with this taped version and their copy of the questions, were asked to write a first draft of a paper on the topic.

In addition to the video tapes, I had an oral tape of the class interpreter doing an interpretation of the story and, at a later date, had instructors in the college's hearing impaired program do a "gloss" of the students' sign language.

In interpretation, the interpreter watches what is signed and gives an oral rendition, putting the intent of the signer into English word order for the hearing person. The oral tape of the interpreter, therefore, reflects to a great extent the syntactic and semantic choices of the interpreter. In contrast, a sign gloss is an oral statement of the signs as they occur and does not alter the word order. On Page 1 of your handout, at the top of the page, you will see the interpreted version of a student's story. On the bottom

of the paper, you will see the sign gloss of the same story and the questions which were asked of the student. For comparison with the student's final written version of the story, the sign gloss shows most closely the student's actual oral/signed language. I was interested in several things--

--the number of words and sentences used in the oral vs. the written version;

--the influence of the questioning on the written draft;

--the syntactic order in the written vs. the oral version; and, especially,

--the possibility of finding some area which could be improved through instruction.

In general, I found that more words and sentences were used in the written version than in the oral/signed version. This was not surprising because sign languages are symbolic and a single sign may represent a cluster of words. More significantly, I found that when my students used the tape-to-writing procedure, their papers were longer and more detailed than when they did not use this procedure. They seemed to benefit from their viewing of the oral draft.

Also, I found that answers to the questions found their way into the written draft. This was especially true of teacher questions which were always answered in the written draft.

In working with the people doing the sign gloss, we noticed that students used different--more formal--signs to answer my questions and less formal, idiomatic signs to answer the questions of their hearing impaired classmates. It seemed that these students had two sign systems--"school signs," which tended to follow a more English word order, and "friend signs," which were closer to the grammar of Ameslan or American Sign Language. This is, perhaps, similar to the spoken language a student will use to answer a teacher's question as compared to a student's less formal language used with peers.

In looking for a specific area to emphasize in instruction, I decided to examine coherence. American Sign Language and its variants, while having a grammar, do not use the grammar (syntax) of English. I decided to investigate what the student does when moving from sign language, which is coherent to him or her, to English, which is coherent to the hearing reader. I was interested in some recent work of W. Ross Winterowd which involves the use of transitions to achieve coherence in writing. I did a detailed analysis of six of my students' tapes and papers, focusing solely on the use of transitions. I found that transitions were used in both oral/signed and written versions; however, in the samples I studied, twice as many transitions were used in the written versions as in the oral/signed versions. A more interesting point of significance was in the variety of transitions used. I found the same transitions in use repeatedly: and, also, too, then, first, next, second, but, before, so, and for.

A study of dictionaries for American Sign Language and its variants indicated no commonly used signs for other transitions: furthermore, in addition, however, therefore, thus, etc. I had an area for instructional application. I needed to teach variant transitions as synonyms for transitions the students already knew.

I feel that this video oral drafting technique could be used with other students as well. The benefits from this technique could include:

--the possibility for the student of seeing as well as hearing his own oral performance as a basis for written drafting;

--the opportunity for the student to benefit from questioning by both instructor and classmates to help the student add detail and clarification to a written version;

--the recognition for the student of the difference between oral language and written language; and

--the option for the instructor of studying video vs. written drafts to isolate areas which could be improved through instruction.

On Page 2 of your handout is the written version which this student

produced based on his video tape and his list of questions from the class.

A second oral composition technique includes the use of audio rather than video tapes.

As coordinator of the Writing Workshop and as its principal instructor, I have had many opportunities to work with students who, for many reasons, are not enrolled in traditional writing courses. Some of these students are physically handicapped. When I was informed by one of our counselors last fall that I would have a wheelchair student in the Workshop and that she and her mother had enrolled in my English Review course, I was not surprised. I had worked with other wheelchair students before--all paraplegics due to accidents.

When Martha and her mother arrived the first day, the Workshop was in disorder: students were arranging their class hours, completing writing samples, taking placement tests. The room was filled to capacity and noisy. Before I could talk with Martha and her mother, they were on their way out the door. Martha was in tears. When I called their home later, I tried to encourage them to return when the semester was underway and the atmosphere would be more settled.

I learned two things from our phone conversation: a victim of cerebral palsy, which is what Martha is, is often extremely sensitive to noise and

confusion; the scene in the Writing Workshop had terrified Martha; and due to the cerebral palsy, Martha is a quadriplegic--not a paraplegic. Physically, she cannot write. Janet, Martha's mother, made no promises and I didn't think they would return.

A week and a half later, Janet wheeled Martha into the classroom once again. Both of them were still enrolled in the English Review course. The course includes work in vocabulary development, spelling, grammar review, and the writing of short compositions. Janet promised to help in any way she could. Martha especially wanted to learn to spell and to learn to write.

After that semester was over, they both enrolled in the next course, Freshman English. In those two semesters, Martha completed eight units in spelling, two levels of Bergan Evans' Wordcraft, and wrote more than thirty compositions.

Our procedure for writing involved oral composition. Martha would tape record her oral draft for a paper. Her first oral draft is on the third page of your handout. (Play tape) I would then transcribe her oral draft to paper, leaving out all punctuation, capitalization and, sometimes, omitting paragraphing and including misspellings. She would then work with Janet and give Janet editing directions which Janet recorded on the written script. If Martha was dissatisfied with the result, she would do another oral draft and reorganize the material and we would repeat the script/editing process, or Janet would recopy a draft in final form. At that point, I would

sit with Martha and Janet and grade the paper. We used an over-lapping work-in-progress method; each week Martha would be working on an oral draft and would, simultaneously, be completing a written final copy of another piece of writing.

At this same time in the Workshop, I was using James Moffet's Punctuation! tapes with other students. This series provides a selection of tapes which accompany scripts of excerpts from professional writers. The written scripts contain no punctuation or capitalization and the student listens to the tapes, punctuates the script according to the oral reading, and then compares student version with professional version. I had long felt that the syntax and vocabulary used on these tapes were too advanced for many of my slower students. I began to make my own punctuation tapes and scripts from the writing my students were doing. With Martha's work, I had a primary source for punctuation tapes. One of her writings, "Honey Bees," has become a staple in the Workshop. Even this semester, a year later, students ask for the tape the wheelchair student wrote.

To illustrate this procedure, look at your handout, page 4. If you like, take a pencil and punctuate the first two paragraphs of the script while listening to the recorded version of the writing. (Play tape) Now, compare your punctuation and capitalization with Martha's version on page 5. I would want to discuss any differences with the student. For example, did all of you

use a comma before the word and at the end of Paragraph 2? We could discuss the optional use of a comma before and in a brief series. The emphasis here is two-fold: First, some marks of punctuation can be heard, an argument for oral proofreading. Second, Martha's version is not the only correct way to punctuate. There are--within limits--options in punctuation. In contrast to a handbook, rule-governed approach to teaching punctuation, an approach which tends to imply that punctuation is exact, the use of punctuation tapes and scripts can teach students what is acceptable rather than what is "correct."

Unknown to Martha, I kept drafts of all of her papers. The cumulative result was a collection of her writings, titled Baubles, Bengals, and Bees, presented to her at the end of the first semester. The title comes from Martha's collection of 286 keychains (the "baubles"), her passion for the Cincinnati "Bengals," especially quarterback Ken Anderson, and her claim to fame in the Writing Workshop, honey "bees." The final paper from this collection is on page 6 of your handout, "Suggestions for Making Waubonsee More Accessible." The executive vice president of the college was so intrigued by Martha and her work that he gave copies of her book to each board member and dean as Christmas presents. That, of course, pleased all of us--but even more pleasing is the fact that Items 2, 3, 6, 7, and modified washroom[5] have been completed at the college.

At the end of the second semester, a second book of writings was completed

and distributed. This book, A Mother-Daughter Banquet, includes writings done by both Martha and Janet. I have single copies of both of these books which you can look at later.

As with the use of video tape with the hearing impaired, which can be extended to use with all students, I feel this audio tape method used with Martha can be expanded for use with other students as well. The basic philosophy with both procedures is a belief in the importance and power of oral composition as a drafting technique.

NCTE, Fall 1981
Session F.9 Oral Composition in
Writing Classes

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ORAL COMPOSITION: HANDICAPPED (Hearing Impaired)

Interpretation of Oral/Signed Story

Topic: Tell about a time when you were afraid.

About four years ago when I was working with my father for a job what I was doing was working on a diesel truck like changing oil filters and fill up with gas diesel gas. I worked for about two months and my father told me he have to leave for vacation, but I was only working in the shop and I really was very scared because I can't communicate with the drivers of the trucks so I said decide okay and I would go ahead alone and work in the shop. Then something happened and a truck came in and I replace the oil filter and I was really a little bit afraid so I wrote on paper what I understood that he wanted to change the oil filter and when it went ahead fine then I thought I was really scared but it wasn't really.

Sign Gloss of Oral/Signed Story

In about four year ago me work with my father for j-o-b/do is work on d-i-s-e-l truck like change o-i-l f-i-l-t-e-r second f-il put in up for gas d-i-s-e-l gas/next work for about three month/happen father say father have leave for vacation but me am only work in s-h-o-p/true w-a-s very-- s-h-o-p s-h-o-p/true was very afraid because can't communicate with driver truck s-o me decide go ahead work alone in s-h-o-p/some happen truck come into/say need change o-i-l f-i-l-t-e-r/me little afraid but write with paper/ understand then change o-i-l -f-i-l-t-e-r/go ahead fine/think w-a-s true scared but not true

(/=juncture; end of sentence)
(---=fingerspelling)

Student Question: Were you afraid when you met other people?
Answer: True little afraid but after that true okay
Student Question: What kind of oil?
Student Question: Where was it?
Answer: In Chicago, in Chicago/31 s-t Street, 31 s-t Street
Everyday o-i-l same car

(over)

Teacher Question: Have you since that time had to do that a lot? Have you had to work on your own and replace things for people who came in? Are you still a little bit scared? Or was it...

Answer: Yes now true all right if know who driver truck very w-e-l-l then know go ahead with other drive truck

Teacher Question: Are people usually nice? Are the drivers usually nice?

Answer: Yes true nice know that father's daughter deaf that why

Written Version of Oral/Signed Story

In about 4 years ago I was working with my father at 31th Street in Chicago. We have had done with working on semi truck as change oil filter, gas filter, and oil also pumping diesel gas into tank. When my father have decided that he wanted to take vacation for a week and make me so scare because I was just so young boy also working by lonely in shop. Then my father was on duty for vacation.

In something happen and lousy noisy. Then I glared at big semi truck was coming into shop and make me so scare. Then a truck driver with big musclar arm and big shoulder was appered me and asking me somethir that I won't understand and can't read his lipread so I wrote down on a paper and he wrote down a paper too and I understand what he was talking about and make me relax and feeling better. Also a truck driver was really gentle man and he knows that I am son of former mechanic.

Tape 1

carol this is for class martha thomasson

now i don t know where to start i ve got so much to tell you i guess i could start with telling you a little bit about my handicap my handicap is called cerebral palsy or c p cerebral palsy and what c p what it is what c p is is this it s when the oxygen is temporarily cut off during the birth process or shortly after the birth and because of this oxygen being cut off or stopped temporarily i have brain damage my oxygen was cut off for a period of time and i have brain damage because of this

i am totally almost totally i would say totally dependent on my mother physically i have severe brain damage because of the oxygen situation

and at the age of fourteen i was in the hospital for surgery brain surgery where they went into my brain and implanted in my cerebellum two electrodes which i have under my skin and this is to help loosen me up it s to help make me not so tight or prevent me from being so tight and that is what these wires are on my back because these wires lead up to the electrodes that are implanted into my brain and this sends an electrical current up through the wires which then lead electricity through my body and helps me to loosen myself up if i confuse you i am sorry

i went to school at normal regular school non handicapped schools however my schools that i went to have facilities for the physically handicapped and i don t mind saying that right now i wish waubonsee was more accessible for the handicapped i wish every building was accessible for the handicapped

i graduated from west aurora north campus the new west high school with the regular class of graduates carol i ll tell you i don t know what it s like to be in a school with just handicapped i was never sent to a school for the handicapped i ve always been in school with the so called normal and i like it at waubonsee a change to be in a good school but i have one complaint i wish they would make the whole college the whole campus accessible for wheel chairs and not just building c although i m glad they do think about us over there but i wish they would make it more accessible they should anyway

carol this is the end

Punctuation Tape: honey bees by martha thomasson

honey bees are native to europe they were probably brought by some of the first immigrants to north america over three hundred years ago

bees are social insects they maintain their own caste system which includes the queen bee worker bees and drone bees

the queen bee is the only sexually normal female of the species her only occupation is laying eggs the queen will mate only once but she mates with as many as six drones she can lay up to fifteen hun dred eggs a day which is equal to her own weight a queen can sting without dying unlike the worker bee s sting which stays in the victim and therefore literally kills the worker bee the queen s sting is curved and smooth and can be easily removed from the victim the queen also lives longer than any other bee her life expectancy is one to three years

all worker bees are asexual females worker bees secrete the wax to build their honeycombs they also gather nectar pollen and water to make honey they defend the colony they take care of the young and they control the temperature of the hive if the hive becomes too cold the bees will hover to make it warm if the hive becomes too warm the bees will flap their wings the vibration of their wings will cool it off bees that are born in the spring and summer only live up to six weeks this is because they have to search for pollen and make the honey for winter the more work they do the shorter their life expectancy is however bees born in the fall or winter season live until the following spring because their jobs allow the worker to stay inside the hive and eat the honey that was already made

the drone bee is almost useless the only thing that they re good for is mating after mating with the queen in the open air and on the fly the drone dies they are not able to sting they cannot store food they are useless so much so that worker bees kick them out of the hive in the fall otherwise the drones would eat the honey that has been made for winter

bees are cultivated for their honey and for beeswax however their greatest use is in pollination both plants and all major crops benefit from the bee s pollination as a result of this they are the most economically valuable species of all the insects

Punctuation Tape: Honey Bees by Martha Thomasson

Honey bees are native to Europe. They were probably brought by some of the first immigrants to North America over three hundred years ago.

Bees are social insects. They maintain their own caste system which includes the queen bee, worker bees, and drone bees.

The queen bee is the only sexually normal female of the species. Her only occupation is laying eggs. The queen will mate only once, but she mates with as many as six drones. She can lay up to fifteen hundred eggs a day, which is equal to her own weight. A queen can sting without dying. Unlike the worker bee's sting which stays in the victim and, therefore, literally kills the worker bee, the queen's sting is curved and smooth and can be easily removed from the victim. The queen also lives longer than any other bee; her life expectancy is one to three years.

All worker bees are asexual females. Worker bees secrete the wax to build their honeycombs. They also gather nectar, pollen, and water to make honey. They defend the colony; they take care of the young; and, they control the temperature of the hive. If the hive becomes too cold, the bees will hover to make it warm; if the hive becomes too warm, the bees will flap their wings. The vibration of their wings will cool it off. Bees that are born in the spring and summer only live up to six weeks. This is because they have to search for pollen and make the honey for the winter. The more work they do, the shorter their life expectancy is. However, bees born in the fall or winter season live until the following spring because their jobs allow the worker to stay inside the hive and eat the honey that was already made.

The drone bee is almost useless. The only thing that they're good for is mating. After mating with the queen, in the open air and on the fly, the drone dies. They are not able to sting; they cannot store food; they are useless, so much so that worker bees kick them out of the hive in the fall. Otherwise, the drones would eat that honey that has been made for winter.

Bees are cultivated for their honey and for beeswax. However, their greatest use is in pollination. Both plants and all major crops benefit from the bees' pollination. As a result of this, they are the most economically valuable species of all the insects.

Suggestions for Making Waubonsee More Accessible

1. At least one outside door in each building should open automatically;
2. The ramps the physically handicapped people use to get from the road to the sidewalk need to be kept free of ice and snow. Last week, it seemed that the ice and snow had been swept onto the ramps. Also, the ramps could be wider and have a better incline. For a good ramp, there should be ten inches of incline for every inch of height;
3. A light switch by the elevator on the ground floor is needed, especially when the inner doors are shut. There is a switch now, but it is too far from the elevator. Also, it would be nice not to get off the elevator into darkness;
4. The elevator needs to be larger so that it is easier to get into. The timing on the doors could be longer to allow more time to get into the elevator after using the key. Finally, the emergency button in the elevator should be checked; it may be too high for some wheelchairs;
5. The registration area in Building C is too congested to allow for wheelchair traffic;
6. Water fountains and telephones are too high for people in wheelchairs to use. Also the coin slots in vending machines are too high;
7. In the Writing Workshop, our folders are kept in the file cabinet. The top drawer is too high to reach;
8. Classrooms should be more centrally located rather than strewn all over;
9. A library entrance on the second floor is needed. The back workroom is congested for wheelchair traffic.
10. Some of these suggestions would help other students too. Handicapped people don't want special privileges.